

Mr. E. C. Smith.

SAL

On the

"IT IS WELL."

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED IN

SALEM CHURCH, GREEN HILL.

On Sabbath, 6th August, 1854.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE PATTERSON,

On the Occasion of the Death of his only Child.

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THE following discourses were preached, as the title page intimates, after the death of CHRISTIANA, the author's first born, and a singularly interesting and engaging child, who was taken from him on the 27th July last, aged nearly two years. They have been rewritten and somewhat condensed, partly as an agreeable solace to the hours of sadness, and partly that in this form he might be able to present them as a testimonial of esteem to the many friends who have manifested their sympathy with him, not without a hope that the few flowers he has been scattering on the grave of one beloved, may yield a balm to some wounded spirit, and attract some wandering heart to HER God and her Saviour.

GREEN HILL, September, 1854.

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"IT IS WELL."

2 KINGS IV. 20. "Is it well with the child?" and she answered, it is well."

THE attentive consideration of the dispensations of Divine Providence, is a duty incumbent upon us all; and an important means of promoting our moral and spiritual improvement. The scriptures denounce a heavy woe against those, who "regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hand;" while the intelligent christian, solicitous, not only to observe the doings of the Lord, but to apply it to those practical ends for which it was designed, is promised the blessing. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

But especially does it become the minister of religion, to observe carefully all the dealings of the Almighty's hand. And as he has the spiritual interest of others committed to his care, it becomes him, if he would act the part of a faithful shepherd, not only to endeavour to obtain spiritual benefit himself by the events that are passing over us, but also to embrace the opportunity of any striking dispensation of God's Providence of directing the attention of those committed to his care to those lessons of warning or reproof, of instruction or of consolation, which it is fitted and intended to teach.

When the hand of God has touched himself, he is called to "bear the rod and who hath appointed it." But such a dispensation is intended to have a wider influence. While, therefore, we approve not of giving unnecessary publicity to his private affairs, and his private sorrows especially naturally court retirement, yet to employ them for practical purposes, even from the pulpit, is only duty, the neglect of which would be sacrificing our

best interests. In this view then while in consequence of a recent afflictive visitation, I would rather "seek where to weep;" yet at the call of duty I am here to-day, and have chosen the passage before us, to direct your attention to the duties and consolations of Christian parents under the loss of little children. It presents to us a mother in this position, and under circumstances which rendered her loss peculiarly distressing. She had received her child when "her husband was old," by the direct interposition of God, and as a special token of His favour. Yet the child thus remarkably given was in a few years taken away by a sudden and severe illness. The dispensation naturally filled her mind with severe distress. "Her soul," says the Prophet, "is vexed within her;" yet in faith she presents her case before the prophet, with hope, probably, that the child might yet be restored to her, certainly in the assurance that God's plans would not be defeated. And in humble resignation to the Divine will, whatever might be the issue, she answers to the enquiry of the prophet's servant regarding the welfare of herself, her husband, and her child: "It is well."

Our design from these words is to show, that on the death of young children, christian parents have reason to say: It is well. And we shall view it in three aspects—from the state of the departed—from the tendency of the event to promote the welfare of survivors, and advance the glory of God.

I.—As regards our departed children themselves. We know not any circumstances better fitted to reconcile friends to separation than the knowledge that their departure will promote their interest. And this may especially lead christian parents whose children are removed by death, to say, it is well, for

1st. *They are freed from much suffering.* Sorrow is the portion of all the children of men here below. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." We seek not to depreciate the number and the variety of the blessings of this life. Far be from us the ingratitude, which would impugn the divine goodness, by not recognizing the amount of enjoyments permitted us

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even in this world. But after all, what a scene of woe does this life present. Who is there that has not been called to mourn—over the disappointments and vexations of life—over the sickbeds of friends, and the graves of those we love—over the follies and the vices of his fellowmen? And has not every one his moments when he is ready to say: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be forever at rest. I would haste me to escape from the windy storm and tempest.”

True, some may long escape severe trouble. For years they may appear exceptions to the general rule. But none are permitted to terminate their journey so. And in these cases how often does it happen that after long delay suffering comes with increased severity. Such sorrows must have been the lot of every departed child. And when we think of all the troubles, which beset the children of men from infancy to old age, may we not say, that “it is well,” that God has spared them all this—that they are now where the weary are at rest, without the toils and struggles of poor humanity here below, and that the good shepherd who “takes the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom,” has hid them in the secret of His presence from the pride of man; and will keep them secretly in his pavilion from the “strife of tongues.”

But 2ndly. It is well with them, because *they are delivered from much temptation and sin*. This world is not more distinguished by sufferings than it is by sin. We know not what might have been the effect upon our departed children, had they been permitted to encounter its allurements. With hearts disposed to sin they might have fallen before the tempter. They might have become the victims of this world's vanities or vices. They might have died without giving us any cheering hope of meeting us in happier circumstances in another world. How often has the profligacy of children brought down a father's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? How many parents have mourned more over one child *living*, than ten *dead*, and in bitterness exclaimed: O that I had buried him in an early grave. Is it not well that they have been spared all *danger* of this?

Even if the event turned out otherwise,—that they became genuine fearers of God,—they would still, had they continued in the world, have committed much sin,—much that would have grieved the hearts of others, and have caused many a bitter tear of anguish to themselves. They would at best have had to maintain a long and painful struggle with sin and temptation, in which, though by divine grace they would ultimately prove conquerors, they would have been often foiled and often full of sorrow. God has been pleased to spare our departed children all this; and seeing them thus taken away from the evil to come, what christian heart to the enquiry of the prophet's servant, "Is it well with the child?" will not answer, "it is well."

But 3rdly. On the death of young children we may say, it is well, *because of the hopes we are permitted to entertain that they are now happy in heaven.* In regard to those dying in infancy, the scriptures give us little information; and it is therefore presumptuous to speak positively regarding them. Rather does it become us to trust their case to God, in the assurance that the Judge of all the Earth shall do right. Yet on the general principles of the word of God, we have much to hope, particularly regarding the children of Christian parents. Erroneous views, however, are very common on the subject, and the salvation of infants is often maintained on ground which will not stand the test of divine truth. Most commonly it is believed on the ground of their native innocence, and thus the doctrine of original sin is directly denied, and the necessity of the atoning blood of the Saviour, and the transforming efficacy of the Holy Spirit, is entirely overlooked.

Such views we cannot admit. The scriptures nowhere describe man as naturally good. On the contrary it teaches, that "the imagination of his heart is only evil, from his youth,"—that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and that men are "*by nature* the children of wrath." In accordance with these inspired declarations enlightened Christian experience will ever express itself in the language of the Psalmist: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my

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mother conceive me." We think too that he must be a blind observer of human nature, who can doubt or deny the inborn depravity of the human soul. Even with all the affection of a parent we cannot be so blind. He who has seen the child of a few months old screaming with anger, or spurning impatiently all resistance to its wishes and all control over its actions,—who has traced the working of selfishness at the very dawn of intelligent action, or who has heard the boisterous outcry, with which it subordinates everything to its wayward desires,—must, we think, be blindly ignorant, or foolishly prejudiced, who perceives not the workings of a corrupt nature, which only requires development to ripen into all the wickedness, which appears in every part of the world, and which the transforming efficacy of the Holy Ghost alone can fit for the abodes of celestial purity. Farther, we cannot think much of the piety of any person, who conceives that even his infant children can be saved *without the mediation of Christ*, as they would be, if they went to heaven for their own sinlessness. Parents! who have harboured such a thought, only think that in that case your children cannot stand in the glorious company before the throne, nor join in their songs. None of them ascribe their salvation to themselves, but unitedly they give glory to the Lamb, saying: "*Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood. Salvation be to our God which sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.*"

Is all dark, then, regarding those who die in infancy? No, we have only been removing the false lights, that we may point you to "a more sure word to which ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." Our hope regarding infants, is, that they are among the number of those given to Christ, whom he redeemed by His blood and whom he renews by His Spirit. As it is expressed in our confession of faith: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the spirit, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth."

In support of this a number of scriptural considerations may be adduced. They have committed no actual transgression, but

the denunciations of perdition in scripture are always connected with personal voluntary agency; and in all the accounts given of the judgement men are represented as judged according to their personal conduct, nor does there appear any evidence of any being condemned except for their actual transgressions. It is true we behold them here suffering many evils for the transgression of the first Adam, but may we not expect that "much more" they shall obtain salvation through the righteousness of the second,

In whom the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.

When we consider, too, the divine character as delighting in mercy, and more especially, that through the glorious work of the Redeemer, mercy can be exercised in harmony with all his perfections, and that now their salvation depends on his will, have we not much to assure us, that all who have not sinned in their own person will be admitted to his favour. Besides this, the scriptures represent God in His dispensations as exercising special care over children; and in every covenant transaction with the children of men he has included the "little ones" in their benignant provisions. He too who came to declare the Father, is exhibited in the endearing character of the good shepherd, who takes the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom, and this character he exemplified on earth by several incidents of the most touching description. One of these deserves particular attention. It is recorded by three of the Evangelists. We quote it from Mark, chap. x. 13—16: "And they brought young children unto him that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked them that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them." From these and similar scriptural considerations, we have strong reason to hope regarding those,

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who have been called away without having sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, that they are included in the election of grace, and that "it is not the will of our heavenly father that one of these little ones should perish."

But in many cases children are called away very early, and yet not until they have become able to discern both good and evil, and have given evidence of their fallen state by feelings and actions which are plainly sinful. Even here, however, the gospel does not leave us without hope. We have the clearest evidence, that the Spirit of God does work in the infantile mind. John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb," and of Jeremiah it is said: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee." There may be difficulty in understanding the *mode* of his operations; but of the fact there can be no doubt. Some of the most eminent saints of God were converted at a period so early that they cannot recollect a time when they did not love the Saviour. And we frequently see, even in young children, evidences which lead Christian parents not only to entertain hope, but the full assurance of hope regarding their welfare, when they are called hence. When they exhibit such an interest in the things of God and the Saviour, as might be expected from the limited comprehension they can have of them, together with a tractable disposition, a meek and submissive spirit and a benevolent heart, even though on all subjects they may speak as a child and think as a child, and though we may see evidence of the power of sin in them, there is good reason to believe, that the spirit has sown the good seed; and though only a few buds may appear here, yet the feeble plant of righteousness has only been transplanted to take root in a richer soil, and to blossom beneath a fairer sky, where no chilling atmosphere will stunt its vigorous growth, or untimely frost blight its early bloom, and that there it shall be more richly laden with the fruits of holiness and glory to the praise of God.

Even children so young as to be incapable of instruction, have exhibited a *character*, which plainly marked the working of the

spirit. One there *was*, of whom I might tell, whose brief course terminated, when scarce two summers had completed their circuit, endeared in many of your dwellings, and who would have been in many more had she been spared, of whom there are those present who can testify, that I speak not the language of parental partiality, merely, when I say, that if tender hearted sensibility—if self-will changed into the most cheerful submission to the will of others—if implicit faith—if a temper once giving way to its little storms of passion, subdued I had almost said to more than the gentleness of the dove—if native selfishness turned into a generosity which seemed to find its delight in ministering to others—if natural impatience so completely disappearing that injury evoked no anger and suffering no murmur—if occasional glimpses of a feeling of reverence towards a higher power—such as might be expected from her feeble capacity—if these, and such as these are evidences of a renewed nature, then might she have been set in many a circle of flaming professors, with the solemn warning to them: “Except ye receive the kingdom of heaven as *this* little child, ye shall in nowise enter therein.”*

But it is to *Christian* parents, who are themselves within the bonds of the covenant, that the scriptures specially speak “comfortable words” regarding their children. The Bible teaches that the children of believers are not born like the Heathen, without the pale of the covenant, but that “they are beloved for the father’s sake.” The promise of the original covenant with Abraham is: “I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee,” and of the provisions of that covenant we are assured, that under the New Testament all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile, are partakers. (Gal. iii. 29). The New Testament recognizes the covenant relation of the children of believers, (Acts 2: 39, 1 Cor 7: 14.) And the Bible is full of promises of God’s gracious care extending to the seed of his people. See as specimens, Deut. 7:9, Psal. 103: 17, Isa. 59:21, 61:19, 65:23, Acts 16:31.

We do not mean to assert that all the children of believers are saved. “They are not all Israel which are of Israel.” These

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declarations only indicate, what is the general course of the divine dispensations. They teach that the children of believers stand to God in a most interesting and important relation—that they are in a covenant sense holy—that their condition has been in a measure dependent upon the faith and Christian devotedness of the parent, and that through this channel God will extend the blessings of salvation to the young, where they are not forfeited by unbelief or unfaithfulness.

The parent, then, who has, in faith upon the divine promises, dedicated his child to the service and the care of a covenant-keeping God, has every reason to hope, when they are called away early in life, that his piety has not been in vain. And when in addition to this, the parent as in the case just referred to, considering the evils to which persons are exposed—whose conversion takes place late in life—the misery of years of sin, and how even after conversion they tend to mar religious enjoyment and hinder Christian progress, has prayed that if it were his heavenly Father's will, his child might be among the number of those, who were sanctified from infancy, and when in the use of means he had seen the early development of an exquisite moral sensibility, as well as of the kindest affections of the heart, he has reason from the gushing fullness of a grateful soul, to admire and praise his goodness, who is the hearer of prayer, and his faithfulness, who keepeth covenant and mercy from generation to generation.

When the enquiry is addressed to such on the departure of their beloved offspring: "Is it well with the child?" not in doubt nor in fear, not even in feeble expectation, but in the full assurance of hope, they may answer: "It is well." Consider to what she has gone,—to God and to the Saviour. We indeed earnestly besought, that if it was our heavenly Father's will, she might be allowed to remain with us, but he who had redeemed her by his blood, was saying: "Father, I will that this child, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that she may behold my glory." And to all our efforts to hinder his will, his Providence uttered the kind but decided rebuke: "Suffer *this* little child to come unto me, and forbid it not." Surely his way is better than

ours. In his presence is fullness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." "There every tear has been wiped away from her eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." There her character is now complete,—free from every imperfection or fault, so as to fit her to associate with the spirits of the just made perfect. There her faculties are expanded to a degree, which they could not have attained, had she lived here till four score years silvered her brow, and possesses an acquaintance with God and heaven, of which the most experienced saint on earth is destitute. There her employments are all holy, all exalted, all worthy of heaven. Say then, is it not well? Would you recall her to the toils and cares, the temptations and sins of this vale of tears?

No, if we could, we would not call thee down.

Even comparing her course with that of those, who after years of usefulness in the church on earth are translated to the church in heaven, may we not say, it is well. As has been finely said; "Suppose two children, both 'vessels of mercy.' The one is taken to heaven in infancy or early youth, and the other is spared till seventy years pass over him. Which of them is most highly favoured! The one in heaven is instructed by Jesus himself, has associated with patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, has held intercourse with angels, and obtained magnificent ideas of divine things. The other has been exposed to trials and temptations, has laboured under much imperfection to serve God, and has at last got the victory, through Christ that loved him. When he enters heaven how small is his knowledge compared with his celestial brother."* Are not those removed early peculiarly favoured, and as they stand amid the throng of the redeemed, where each ascribes glory to God for his saving grace, may not they allege their special and peculiar reasons for adoring wonder and everlasting praise.

Babes, thither caught from womb and breast
Claim right to sing above the rest,
Because they found the happy shore
They neither knew nor sought before.

* Somerville's Good Shepherd's care of the Lambs of the flock.

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Lastly, on this part of our subject, Christian parents may say on the death of young children, it is well, because *we hope to have them restored to us under happier circumstances.*

You have experienced how the hope of meeting has solaced friends amid the unavoidable sufferings of this life. But Christian parents, sorrowing for their little ones torn from them by death, are exhorted to take comfort in the consideration, that the separation is not eternal. "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

This woman seems to have expected that her child would be restored to her in this life. Like Abraham she seems to have "accounted that God was able to raise him up even from the dead;" and her faith was not in vain. At the intercession of the prophet, life returned, and the child was restored to his mother's arms. We are permitted to expect no such miraculous interposition; and we must in due time follow our departed children to the narrow house appointed for all living. "We shall go to them, but they shall not return to us."

But as certainly if we are united to Christ, they will be restored to us, though in a different manner. "When a few years are come, then we shall go the way whence we shall not return." Then, while our ashes mingle together in the grave, our spirits will meet together in the presence of the Saviour, and bask in the beatific splendour of unfading bliss.

But it is especially at the resurrection that the full restoration will take place. "The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Christ has died, and by dying paid the ransom of his people; and he has risen as a pledge that they shall in due time be delivered from the power of the grave. "Now, is Christ, risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." "If we

believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

True, the bodies of His saints "see corruption;" but "their very dust is precious in his eyes"—those bodies are "temples of the Holy Ghost," and in due time, they shall, at the sounding of the last trump, spring to life "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

How delightful to parents, themselves partakers of an interest in this resurrection, to receive the forms, which they have buried out of their sight, now glorious in beauty and reunited to their spirits,—which in the meantime have been mingling in the exercises and employments of the Upper Sanctuary. Aye, and receive them, not as this woman received her child for a few years, again to be severed from them by death, but never, never to part. "So shall we be *ever* with the Lord." "Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

"Tell us, then," to use the language of Dr. Chalmers, "if Christianity do not throw a pleasing radiance around an infant's tomb? and should any parent, who hears us, feel softened by the touching remembrance of a light, that twinkled a few short months under his roof, and at the end of its little period expired;—we cannot think that we venture too far, when we say that he is only to persevere in the faith and in the following of the gospel, and that very light will again shine upon him in heaven. The blossom which withered here upon its stalk, has been transplanted there to a place of endurance; and it will then gladden the eye which now weeps out the agony of an affection that has been sorely wounded; and in the name of Him, who, if on earth would have wept along with them, do we bid all believers present to sorrow not even as others that have no hope, but to take comfort in the thought of that country where there is no sorrow and no separation.

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Hath she not then, for pains and fears—
The day of woe, the watchful night—
For all her sorrow, all her tears—
An overpayment of delight?" *

PART II.

II. We have thus considered the grounds on which, in reference to departed children, Christian parents have reason to say: "it is well." The answer, however, is general, and may be viewed with reference to the whole circumstances of the case. Accordingly we proceed now to the second portion of our subject, to illustrate the idea, that under such a dispensation we may say, it is well, from its tendency to promote the welfare of survivors.

All afflictions are intended for wise and good purposes; and, where rightly used, subserve the moral and spiritual improvement of the children of men. "The rod and the reproof give wisdom;" and, as the result, an innumerable number of the best of men in every age have testified: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Among the afflictions that flesh is heir to, none are more severe and trying, and yet none more fitted to advance our moral and spiritual improvement, than the removal of friends.

"Smitten friends
Are angels sent on errands full of love,
For us they languish, and for us they die,
And shall they languish, shall they die, in vain?
Ungrateful shall we vex their hovering shades,
That wait the revolution in our hearts?
Shall we disclaim their silent, soft address,
Their posthumous advice and pious prayer,
Senseless as herds that graze their hallowed graves,
Tread under foot their agonies and groans,
Frustrate their anguish, and destroy their deaths?"

The death of children is fitted to teach us all the lessons which afflictions in general, or that the death of others, does. But there are some lessons which it teaches with peculiar force. It specially serves as a warning against making any other than God,

* Chalmers on Romans, Lecture xiv.

the object of our supreme affection. God requires that we love Him "with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind." But the things of this life are too apt to engross our attention. And we are often most in danger from objects which are lawful. We at once see the impropriety of following sinful pursuits, but we are not sufficiently on our guard against our hearts being taken up with lawful things. Hence even our children become a snare to us. They naturally and properly draw forth strong feelings of affection; and "ere even we are aware," we may give them that place in our hearts, which belongs only to the Creator. By the removal of them God says: "My son, give me thine heart," and however painful the discipline, yet it is often necessary, and when rightly improved, it afterward "yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

But farther, such a dispensation is fitted to teach us the instability of earthly things, and to lead us to "set our affections on things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." It teaches us that the very best objects in this life are not permanent, but are rapidly passing away. It is the severance of one of the ties that bind us to earth. It says: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest, for it is polluted." And as we naturally look with interest and attachment to the place, to which those we love have gone, it forms a new tie to bind us to heaven. May "our treasure be there and our hearts also."

Lastly. The death of young children is a solemn warning to parents to be faithful in the discharge of their duty to their little ones. No thoughtful parent can lay a child in the grave without remembering past delinquencies—how much he might have done for it, that he has not done, and for which the opportunity has forever closed. Reflection upon this is fitted to excite us to diligence in the discharge of duty to those which still survive. Especially in the case of very young children, considering that they are incapable of instruction, and that all that we can do to promote their spiritual improvement, is to present them in faith and prayer before a covenant keeping God, how earnest should

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If the death of young children is in these ways specially fitted to secure the spiritual welfare of others, as well as generally in the same manner as all affliction, may not survivors say : " it is well."

In the present case, however, a peculiarity of the event is, that it is in the family of a minister. This is a view, which has several important consequences leading us to the same conclusion. The servants of God have been in every age like their master, and like the meanest of his followers, subject to suffering. One design of this is, doubtless, their own spiritual good. They are men of like passions with others. They have the same evil heart by nature. They are the subjects of the same work of grace, and in carrying it on, God employs the same means as with the humble Christian. For the subduing of their corruptions God sees the same discipline necessary. And indeed from the very frequency of their handling spiritual subjects, they are in danger of getting into the habit of treating them in a *professional* manner, and not as matters in which they have a deep *present* interest. Thus while made keepers of the vineyard of others, they are in danger of not keeping their own vineyard. To avoid this, they are chastened with pain,—and thus being made to feel the importance of divine things practically, their growth in grace is promoted, and they increase in meetness both for the service and the enjoyment of God.

But ministers are visited with affliction for special reasons connected with their work. It is intended to *enlarge their christian experience*, and thus to make them more useful in their work. Diligent study, particularly the study of God's word, is absolutely necessary to fit them for their work, and will do much to make them "workmen that need not be ashamed." But it is not sufficient to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work : the minister of religion must learn Christianity by experience. He must know from his own heart the workings of natural corruption and the struggles of grace,—the trials by which the Christian is

soul it is essential that he feel its distresses. Without it, exhortations will seem a mockery,—and where it is deep and genuine, it will do much to comfort, where the removal of the grief is impossible. Now a kind heart may do much to enable us to sympathize with others, but no man knows the feelings of the afflicted until he has felt affliction himself, nor can he have the same sympathy for them.* Hence our Saviour was called to suffering, that he might be able to sympathize. “We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he suffered, being tempted, he knows how to succor them that are tempted.” May it not be expected that it will be necessary that his servants in the gospel of God’s Son, must pass through a similar discipline. “It is enough that the disciple be as his master, and the servant as his Lord.”

Lastly, affliction is intended *to enable the minister to comfort others*. This is so beautifully expressed by the apostle Paul, that we feel it necessary only to quote his words, (2 Cor. i. 3—6.) “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the endurance of the same sufferings, which we also suffer;—or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.”

Viewing the special aspects of the dispensation, and seeing its bearings, indirect but yet important, upon the ministerial work,

* “I am fully sensible, says Cecil, that I should have been hardened against the distresses of my hearers, if I had not been induced from my natural stoicism by domestic suffering.”

are we not taught to hush every rising murmur, and in submission of spirit to say : " It is well."

III. Christian parents have reason to say under such a dispensation, it is well, when we consider it as promoting the glory of God. This is the great end of the Creator in all his works. God can have no higher view in all his procedure than the illustration of his own perfections. And all who have been baptized into his spirit, acknowledge the propriety of this, nay, make this their chief object in their own conduct, and will ever rejoice when they behold the arrangements of God securing this end. When, therefore, Christian parents behold the character of God illustriously displayed, even in the removal of their children, they must say : " It is well."

How such an end is accomplished in the present dispensation will appear from what has been already said. We will notice, however, a few points in which his glory is specially manifested.

1st. *His Sovereignty.* God is the uncontrolled Sovereign and the absolute proprietor of all—" doing according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Especially does he hold the life and death of his creatures as at his disposal. " Behold I, even I, am He, I kill and I wound, I heal and I make alive ; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." In such dispensations God is seen exercising his prerogative in the eyes of men, who are slow to acknowledge his supremacy. He is sounding aloud, in ears slow to hear : " Be still and know that I am God." He gives and He taketh away, and he giveth none account of his matters. This appears in every death, but in some instances much more strikingly than in others. When the aged are removed, we are inclined to look upon the event as something in the ordinary course of nature ; but in such as the present we must resolve it entirely into the will of God, in whose hands is our breath ; and we are obliged to say : " Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

2ndly. *His Redeeming Grace.* We have already disclaimed any hope of salvation, even for children, except through the

mediation of Christ. The nature the child of God's grace is like all the righteousness we saved us, by the Holy Ghost." thy name give

How striking is he who made a fancy and child of his social into their salvation, trophies of His who became, his our mortal existence period—yea, poor them home to Spirit," who come and to make it. And as the myriads join in the bring new and the kingdom of

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mediation of Christ. We behold them "born in sin," and "by nature the children of wrath." Their salvation, then, is entirely of God's grace, abounding through his Son. They must say, like all the redeemed from among men, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

How strikingly does it manifest the love of the Father, that he who made all worlds should have fixed his regards upon infancy and childhood,—should have manifested so many evidences of his social interest in them, even to the giving of His Son for their salvation,—and should welcome them to his presence as the trophies of His Son's victory. How tender the love of the Son, who became, himself, an infant, and passed through each stage of our mortal existence, that he might sanctify and save every period—yea, poured out his soul unto death for them, and gathers them home to his glory. Nor let us omit "the love of the Spirit," who condescends to dwell in that little bosom, to sanctify and to make it meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And as the myriads of infant spirits from all countries and generations join in the praises of the Redeemed, will not their salvation bring new and peculiar honours to his name. "For of such is the kingdom of heaven."

3rdly. *His all-wise directing Providence.* Such an event does, at times, appear to our limited conceptions, at variance with the wisdom of God. Why is it that one so young—comparatively so innocent, suffers so severely? What purpose is gained by sending her here when removed so early? Why was she permitted so to engage our affections and to have our hearts riven by her removal? These are inquiries which, perhaps, we cannot fully answer. But in the accomplishment of such designs as these we have described, we see the partial unfolding of the divine plan, and learn enough, to say: "He hath done all things well."

In overruling such events for the accomplishment of his own

gracious purposes, "out of evil educing good," we are called upon to admire the hand of him "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." And what we "know not now, we shall know hereafter." Then will the wisdom of God be seen in its manifold arrangements, and, with more intense admiration, shall we say: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out."

Lastly. *His gracious, sustaining, and comforting influences.* For every consideration that is comforting in the loss of friends, we are indebted to the gospel of God's Son. Are their spirits now with Jesus? it is because he, having gone and prepared a place for them, has returned and taken them to himself. And will their bodies be restored from the power of the grave, and soul and body united, spend a happy eternity in the service and enjoyments of him? it is because he is "the resurrection and the life." What reason have we, who live in a Christian land, to bless God for such glorious consolations!

And yet, to apply these truths to the heart, so that we may derive the comfort they are fitted to afford, is not the work of man. Such dispensations, even with the outward light of the word, flesh and blood cannot sustain without a murmur; and under them, without the influence of the Comforter, we should still "refuse to be comforted." When, therefore, we are enabled to maintain resignation under his afflicting hand, it is to the praise of the glory of his grace, and we are constrained to say: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation."

A few remarks in the way of practical improvement will conclude this subject.

1st. Let *congregations* learn to improve the afflictions of their pastors. When Ezekiel's wife died, God commanded him to say: "Ezekiel is a sign to you." The removal of the desire of his

eyes with a stroke boasted, should Like the child the affliction of what these things benefit congregations have their direct rest;" they produce closer serve as a warning anger, take them

2ndly. This should be warned. You likely that you in early life. If you should not evil heart which given, you must that will love God heaven. Oh, then, too, to give you be discouraged by regard. He loves youngest here,—and when you die are his, then, at great gain. You to his right hand

3rdly. This should to sorrow as the mourn, but not wept at the grave swallowed up of

eyes with a stroke, was a sign that the sanctuary of which they boasted, should be desolate, and their children put to the sword. Like the children of Israel, it becomes Christian people, under the affliction of their ministers, to say: "Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us." They are intended indirectly to benefit congregations by their influence on ministers. But they have their direct lessons. They say to you: "This is not your rest;" they proclaim aloud: "Set your affections on things which are above, not on things on the earth." They should tend to produce closer sympathy between ministers and people, and they serve as a warning to improve your privileges, lest God, in his anger, take them away.

2ndly. This subject speaks to *the young*. My dear children, be warned. You may live till you grow old, but it is just as likely that you will die young. Many of you will certainly die in early life. But you are sinners—you have done many things you should not have done, and you do them because you have an evil heart which leads you astray. Unless these sins are forgiven, you must perish for ever; and unless you get a new heart, that will love God and all that is good, you will never be fit for heaven. Oh, then, pray to God to forgive your sins, and ask him, too, to give you his Spirit, to change your wicked heart. Do not be discouraged by thinking that you are too small for Christ to regard. He loves little children,—he is willing to receive even the youngest here,—to save you from sin, to make you a good child, and when you die to take you home to himself in glory. If you are his, then, at whatever time death comes, it will be to you great gain. You will go to Christ, where is fullness of joy, and to his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore.

3rdly. This subject calls upon *bereaved Christian parents*, not to sorrow as those who have no hope. You are allowed to mourn, but not to murmur. You must weep. Jesus himself wept at the grave of a beloved friend: but you are not to be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. You must feel, and feel

keenly—it is your nature—and he who knows your frame does not forbid it ; but he forbids you to “ faint when you are rebuked of him.” “ Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears ; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord ; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end that thy children shall come again to their own border.”

4thly. This subject should *stimulate Christian parents* to diligence in the discharge of their duties to their *living* children. The welfare of your children depends, under God, mainly on your faithfulness. How earnest should you be in training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If they are so young as to be incapable of instruction, you can only pray for them, and present them in faith to God. But this should only make you the more earnest in doing this. Oh, then, restrain not prayer—and daily carry them in the arms of faith before the mercy seat—plead the promises of the covenant, and commit them to the care of your covenant God. You may soon have to lay them in the grave. How much will it increase the bitterness of separation, to think that you have neglected any means for securing their everlasting happiness.

Lastly. This subject *warns parents to be earnest in seeking their own salvation*. Till you do this you cannot be earnest about the salvation of your children. And if God is gracious to the children of his people, remember that his curse often follows the wicked to the third and fourth generation. Through your neglect, your children may grow up without the fear of God, and perish in their iniquity ; but their blood will He require at your hand. But listen to the tender appeal of God : “ Oh that there was such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, *that it might be well with them and with their children for ever.*” “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and *thy house.*”

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NOTE ON PAGE 10.

Thus above may seem, to some, the expression of parental partiality, but those who had an opportunity of knowing her will testify that the picture is not over-drawn. When about a year old, she, indeed, exhibited strong indications of a quick temper and determined-self-will. We began at that early age to correct her, and by God's gracious blessing on the use of the means, a remarkable change passed over her character. During several months at the close of her life, we can scarcely recollect an instance in which her conduct called for any marked reproof. Scarcely a positive act of disobedience can we recall during that period. The expression of her mother's will was sufficient to induce her to do ANY THING she was bidden—to avoid any thing we did not wish her to do, or to give up any thing, however desirous she might be of retaining it. Never, during those later months, do we recollect of her giving way to anger or impatience, but a uniform sweetness of temper was maintained under every circumstance. Her delight was to get any thing to give to any person, and particularly when with other children, she never showed that disposition to have her own way, so often manifested by those so young, but rather a disposition in all things to please them. Her tender heartedness was so remarkable, that, had she been spared, we fear it would have been a trouble to her. The recitation of the first verse of Mother Hubbard's dog moved her to tears, and for some time after, we had only to repeat it with something of a mournful tone, to produce the same effect. Her affection was such, that the threat of her mamma being displeased with her was sufficient to secure obedience, and the fear of her "mamma not loving her," filled her little heart with grief. And who can tell what thoughts of higher things might have been awakened in that childish bosom. The apparent reverence with which she would "say grace," when directed, the full prostration during the time of family prayer, the interest with which, on retiring to rest, she would herself seek to "say prayers," and the seeming devoutness with which she would say the verse, which has given the first lessons of trust in Divine Providence, to so many infant minds, "Now I lay me down," &c., though they might excite a smile, who knows but they were the rising of the infantile spirit to the Eternal and the mercereated, the aspirations which had yet, neither name nor expression.

"Has there ever been a child like Eva?" says Mrs. Stowe, in Uncle Tom's Cabin. "Yes there have been; but their names are always on grave stones, and their sweet smiles, their heavenly eyes, their singular words and ways, are among the buried treasures of yearning hearts. In how many families do you hear the legend, that all the goodness and graces of the living are nothing to the peculiar charms of one who is now. It is as if heaven had an especial band of angels, whose office it was to sojourn for a season here, and endear the wayward human heart, that they might bear it upward with them on their homeward flight. When you see that deep spiritual light in the eye—when the little soul reveals itself in words sweeter and wiser than the ordinary words of children, hope not to retain that child, for the seal of heaven is on it, and the light of immortality looks out from its eyes."

We might have thought so, and been prepared for what has happened. But we had been so accustomed to regard the unnatural precocity, sometimes manifested in children, as connected with ill health, that we never dreamed of any thing of this kind, in one whose very figure was a model of vigor, and who had never known a half hour's sickness till her last illness. In several particulars two, she was not more forward than children at her age commonly are. It was only in her affectionate disposition and the early development of moral sensibility, that she exhibited any thing peculiar. Besides all her actions and words were so sweetly natural, that our eyes were blinded. Nor were they opened till her last illness was far advanced; indeed only when she was gone did we fully realize the truth. Then did we see that we had "entertained an angel unawares."

Her last illness came very suddenly. On the day fortnight from that on which she died, she was playing with her usual life. But during the night she took suddenly unwell and complained of her head. When dressed in the morning, she did not go down to play as usual, and from that time she did not put her feet to the ground. Medical aid was called and all the means used that appeared likely to be beneficial, but they had little or no effect. Prayer was made continually, that, if it were God's will, she might be spared, but the all-wise disposer of all events had determined it otherwise.

We sought to stay a spirit ripe for heaven,
And heaven in its mercy, and its love, refused.

Her sufferings were very severe, but under them she manifested the same sweet disposition as in health. Never did she refuse any medicine, however nauseous, when desired by her mother, and the spirit of obedience was exemplified by the efforts made in pain and weakness to do what she was required. Severe as were her sufferings it was mercifully granted that she was sensible throughout. During the last few days she was a good part of the time in a stupor, but in the intervals she showed, though scarcely able to speak, that she had the complete possession of her senses. On the day before she died, a day on which, more than once, we had looked for her last, she sweetly kissed her parents and her little uncle, to whom she was much attached, and several times manifested a desire, when in the arms of others, to go to her mother. Before daylight on the morning of the day on which she died, her mother, bending over her, asked, "do you know mamma?" The answer came sweetly, "Thay," (her own word for yes.) Her mother said, "Put your arms round mamma's neck." One arm was raised, and the other partly, she having partly lost the power of it, and then there was a feeble pressure. This was the last time she spoke. She, however, through the whole morning, gave signs that she was quite sensible. Between ten and eleven o'clock her father's sisters having arrived, she showed that she recognized them by directing her eyes from one to the other, as we severally asked for the one or the other by name. This was the last sign of intelligence elicited from her.

Her mother brought in a half-blown rose and held it before her. (She was passionately fond of flowers.) Her little arm, though partly paralyzed, was slightly raised to receive it. It was placed in her hand, and her mother told her to smell it. The hand was raised toward her face. A WHITE MORNING GLORY was placed in the other, and as she lay there for some time, a sweeter picture ne'er was seen, even in poets' dream. Her mother said, "give one to papa." The old spirit of obedience triumphed, and the hand was stretched toward her father.

We had greatly feared that, as she had suffered so severely, her last moments might present a scene of agony, and we had earnestly besought the Lord that he would spare this trial. Our prayer was heard, and anything more touchingly sweet, than the last

scene of her little description of she died, the careless, unmistakable face of the child, her lime expression—immortal life in the change came, her looked as if her attention was as if she had her guardian spirit—the bitterness of yet now an expression knew her appearance gazed for hours. thus for about an hour her countenance. I dew, she sank to rest scene that only those she expired.

And now farewell we behold thy joyful from our memory. the journey of life is us to our eternal home infant mind in divine ing of the early buds of leading thee to the yet lead us to him in the glorious city. Th away many brooding hour. Thou hast taught us to direct our lives no more death. May who placed a little child in the spirit of his confiding affection, and more deeply imbued with paratory to our meeting Saviour. "So shall we

scene of her little life we hope not to see on earth. We have read nothing like it, but the description of the death of little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. About an hour before she died, the change came,—“that look,” as Mrs. Stowe has it, “indescribable, hopeless, unmistakable, that says to thee that thy beloved is no longer thine.” “On the face of the child, however, there was no ghastly imprint,—only a high and almost sublime expression—the overshadowing presence of spiritual natures, the dawning of immortal life in that childish soul.” Such was EXACTLY her appearance. When the change came, her eyes rolled upwards, but not with any painful expression. She looked as if her attention had been caught by some bright and pleasing object, that it was as if she had seen a vision of angels. We might have fancied that she had seen her guardian spirit beckoning her to “come away.” In an instant we perceived that “the bitterness of death was past.” Though the features were not naturally beautiful, yet now an expression of heavenly beauty rested on her countenance. Though we knew her appearance was the precursor of a change, the dearest friend could have gazed for hours. “We beheld her face as it had been the face of an angel.” She lay thus for about an hour, occasionally a slight smile, sweeter than of earth, passing over her countenance. But her breath gradually grew fainter, until, softly as the falling dew, she sank to rest, and her spirit returned to God who gave it. So easy was the last scene that only those who were very near and closely watching, detected the moment she expired.

And now farewell, FOR THE PRESENT, dear little “Kitty-ganna.”* No more shall we behold thy joylit face or hear thy childish prattle, but long will it be ere thou fadest from our memory. We shall miss thy welcome as we return to our home. But when the journey of life is done, thou mayest meet us on the other side Jordan, and welcome us to our eternal home. We had looked forward to the time when we should train thy infant mind in divine things. We had anticipated the pleasure of watching the unfolding of the early buds of piety in thy soul,—and joyous would have been, to us, the work of leading thee to the Saviour. But now thou mayest be our instructor. Thou mayest yet lead us to him in bodily presence, and be our guide amid the enchanting scenes of the glorious city. Thy brief life here has not been in vain. Thou hast served to drive away many brooding cares from thy parents’ hearts—thou hast cheered many a solitary hour. Thou hast taught them lessons of love, of humility, and of faith, and now thou earnest to direct our hearts to that better land, where there shall be no separation and no more death. May we be indeed better by thy having been among us. Surely He who placed a little child among a company of ambitious and earthly minded, to teach them the spirit of his kingdom, placed thee among us that we might learn humility, confiding affection, and self-denial, from thy example. And now may our hearts be more deeply imbued with the spirit of that brighter world to which thou hast gone, preparatory to our meeting thee there, never again to be separated from thee, or from the Saviour. “So shall we be ever with the Lord.”

* Her own name for herself.